Above: The District No. 5 schoolhouse at Pleasant Ridge, Grant County, in the 1890's. *On the cover:* John Greene, a patriarch of the Pleasant Ridge community who escaped with his family from slavery in 1863 and settled in Grant County. (Both photographs courtesy of the Grant County Historical Society. Copies of these and the other photographs in the booklet are in the Iconographic Collection of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin.)

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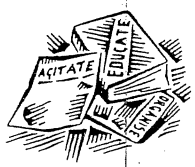

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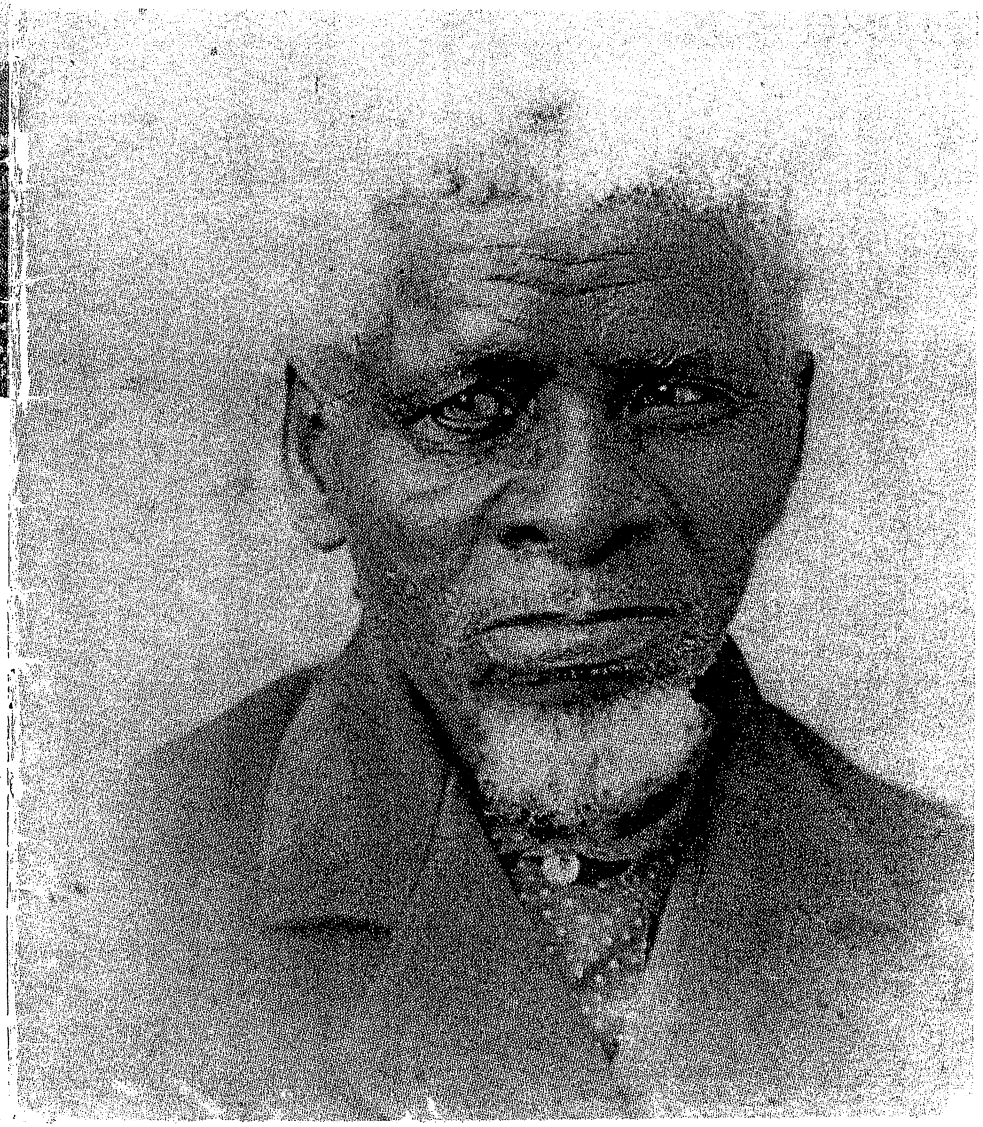
Black Settlers in rural Wisconsin



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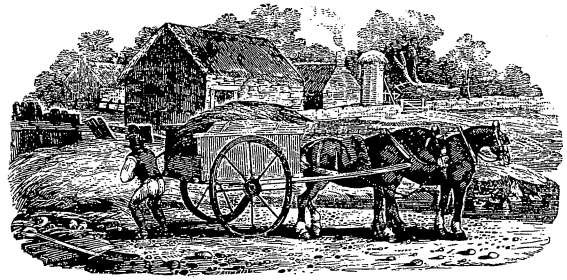

BLACK SETTLERS IN RURAL WISCONSIN

By *Zachary Cooper*

The State Historical Society of Wisconsin
Madison : 1977

Acknowledgments

I wish to thank Professor James Knox Phillips for his early interest in this subject, and for making his manuscript notes available. Very special thanks are due the many descendants, neighbors, and friends of these pioneer settlers who gave of their time to provide me with information.

ZACHARY COOPER

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as uniquely Afro-American; they usually demonstrated the ability of their builders to adapt existing structures and fit them to their needs.

While the two communities had much in common, there were differences. Cheyenne Valley experienced a greater amount of integration and interracial marriage. By the 1870's, Pleasant Ridge began to decline in population while the Cheyenne Valley settlement continued to grow. This difference can be attributed to two possible causes: first, the relative lack of interracial marriage in Pleasant Ridge meant that members of the Pleasant Ridge Afro-American community had to go elsewhere to marry and raise a family; second, many from the Pleasant Ridge community went to college. The scarcity of job opportunities in this rural community for the better educated made it necessary that they earn their living elsewhere.

A final contrast can be seen in the backgrounds of the settlers. Those who settled in Pleasant Ridge were escaped or recently freed slaves. The black settlers in Cheyenne Valley had been freedmen longer and had gradually moved northwestward to Wisconsin.

Afro-American settlement in rural Wisconsin demonstrated two significant features. One was the energy, persistence, and eventual success of those black people who chose to reside in the Badger State. The other was the acceptance by the white community of these nonwhite pioneers. The interaction between these forces was testament to the good sense of the communities involved as well as to the opportunities afforded those men and women willing to work hard to transform frontier Wisconsin into the kind of state it is today.

town speakers. He recalled one speech in which the speaker, a minister from out-of-town said, "Everywhere I go I see separate partitions for Negroes. Believe me, when I get to heaven and I look around and see separate partitions for whites and separate partitions for Negroes up there, I'm going to tear down all those partitions and tell the white folks, if they don't like it they can go to hell!"

It was not until 1930 that the Autumn Leaf Club scored a first when it brought in George Abernathy and his Royal Knights of Milwaukee to perform, and thus became the first all black band to play in Pleasant Ridge.

Although there was considerable involvement of community members in the Civil War, with six of the sixty-five Wisconsin blacks who served in the Union army being from Pleasant Ridge, there was no participation in the Mexican or Spanish-American wars. However, many of them served in World War I.

BLACK people settled in rural Wisconsin before the Civil War. The two largest settlements were Pleasant Ridge (Grant County) and Cheyenne Valley (Vernon County), both located in southwestern Wisconsin.

Besides freedom, religion, and educational opportunities, these black pioneers were attracted to Wisconsin by the prospect of cheap arable land. The opening up of Wisconsin Territory permitted land to be purchased at the going rate of one to three dollars an acre. Since they had been farmers and were accustomed to tilling the soil, fertile land was an important consideration. Cheyenne Valley and Pleasant Ridge both had all of the features for the making of an ideal farming settlement: a good source of water, plenty of timber, berries, fruits, nuts, and an abundance of arable and grazing land. It was not until the last quarter of the nineteenth century that urban industries became a major factor in determining where black immigrants settled in Wisconsin.

Aside from their southwestern Wisconsin geographical location, these Afro-American settlements shared many common characteristics. In each community the black settlers owned the land that they farmed. Consequently, no friction was caused by job competition. They prospered through their farming endeavors and co-operated with their white neighbors in building schools and churches and in developing the land. The houses that they built did not reflect any particular architectural style that could be identified

BLACK SETTLERS IN RURAL WISCONSIN

EVER since Wisconsin was recognized as a geographical entity Afro-Americans have played a role in its development. Records indicate that blacks have been in Wisconsin at least since the 1700's when, serving as trappers, guides, boatmen, and interpreters, they accompanied French voyageurs and fur traders into the area. Later, when Wisconsin was under British control, they held the same positions and also served as soldiers. Two black fur traders established what is now Marinette in 1791-1792, but the first free blacks to take up permanent residence were French-mulatto families who settled in Prairie du Chien in the early part of the nineteenth century. The mother of Registre Gagnier, slain by the Winnebago chief Red Bird in Prairie du Chien in the summer of 1827, was a black. Another of her five sons was the village blacksmith, while the others were described as "substantial farmers." In the early 1840's free blacks came to Calumet County, where in January, 1845, Moses Stanton, a black, founded the present city of Chilton, formerly called Stantonville. Within two years Stanton had built a successful sawmill and grist mill and had induced others to follow him to the settlement. A black man named Jackson established the Town of Freedom in Outagamie County, and another, John Riley, became the proprietor of Racine's first barbershop in 1848.

Although the Ordinance of 1787 expressly prohibited slavery in the Northwest Territory, a census taken of Michigan Territory in 1835 reveals that in the region, which within a year became the Territory of Wisconsin, out of a total population of ninety-one Afro-Americans, twenty-seven were listed as slaves. Nine were owned by Southern officers stationed at Fort Crawford, the rest mainly by slaveholders who had located in the lead-mining section of Grant County. Among these were John Rountree, the founder of Platteville, and Henry Dodge, Wisconsin's first territorial governor. Both men freed their slaves, Dodge in 1838 when he gave each of his five male slaves forty acres and a yoke of oxen. But despite the

Northwest Ordinance ban against slavery, and although it was generally accepted that a slave was free the moment he set foot on Wisconsin soil, the census of 1840 nevertheless showed that out of a population of 30,945, there were 185 free blacks and eleven persons still being held in servitude. Not included in this number were two young women owned by the wife of the Virginia-born Reverend James Mitchell, a Methodist Episcopal minister who held various pastorates in the southern part of the state. Subsequently Mitchell sent the pair South to be sold, and as a result was deprived of his ministry.

By 1850, when Wisconsin's population had risen to 305,391, the census listed 635 free blacks and no slaves at all. In 1860, as the country stood at the brink of Civil War, the number of blacks in the state had increased to 1,171. Part of this increase was owing to the laws of all Southern states requiring that any slave, upon being freed, was required to emigrate, with the result that manumitted blacks and their families usually moved to such border states as Indiana, Ohio, Illinois, and Missouri. In addition, about 40,000 slaves had succeeded in escaping to Ohio between 1830 and 1860. However, with the passage of the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850, the fear of being kidnapped and returned to bondage in the South undoubtedly precipitated their movement farther north and westward, and eventually into Wisconsin.

Most Wisconsinites disagreed with the Fugitive Slave Act, which permitted slave catchers to cross state lines for the purpose of returning escaped slaves, and in some cases to kidnap free blacks. In 1854 Joshua Glover, an escaped slave from Missouri who had been working in Racine for two years, was apprehended by his former master and imprisoned in Milwaukee. A band of men from Racine and Milwaukee broke open the jail, freed Glover, and sent him to safety in Canada. The case eventually led the Wisconsin supreme court to defy the federal government by declaring the Fugitive Slave Act unconstitutional.

From 1619, when the first Africans arrived in America aboard a Dutch ship, until 1865, an estimated 350,000 to half a million blacks were imported, initially as indentured servants who were gradually reduced to the status of slaves. Through natural increase their number had grown to 4,441,830 by 1860, only a fraction of whom lived outside the South. Thus the bulk of the Afro-American population was concentrated in the agricultural southern states where the cultivation of cotton, tobacco, and rice required a large labor force.

too much for her strength. She died on April 19, 1908, at Reliance, South Dakota, where she had moved for reasons of health.

It was the education of the children that contributed in part to the eventual disintegration of Pleasant Ridge. Jobs in the community and the surrounding area were not always available for high school and college graduates, who were forced to leave home and seek employment elsewhere.

The right to worship was very important to the residents of the community. Both black and white settlers gathered together and decided on the need for a church to replace the log schoolhouse built in 1870 in which religious services were customarily held. Therefore, in 1882, a log church was built where members of both races worshipped. The community named it United Brethren Methodist Church, and at the turn of the twentieth century it had a membership of about eighty. A cemetery was built alongside the church; the first person buried there was the murdered Civil War veteran Samuel Gadlin in 1883.

In 1898, the younger generation met and decided to build a log building known as The Hall. The Hall was built to be a community center and was located near a grove on land donated by Thomas Greene. In it picnics and barbecues were frequently held.

Meeting at the Walter Grimes home, a few friends and relatives gathered together and organized the Autumn Leaf Club in 1906. The purpose was to bring together not only local Afro-American families but also members of families who had moved to other areas. The Club was granted a state charter and continued to remain active until the 1940's. Annually, around August 4, the Autumn Leaf Club would sponsor a get-together, held in the grove by The Hall. It was said that the genial Cap'n Craig, the head chef, "would get up early in the morning to begin barbecuing whole pigs and chickens for the celebration." Dick Lewis would handle the refreshment stand. In the afternoon the Club would meet and families would be reunited. "And through the clear summer night and on into the morning, the Negro band poured out its jazzy music while Negroes, dancing on the same platform that the whites were, enjoyed their freedom under the twinkling north star, the star that led their ancestors northward to freedom and to Pleasant Ridge over a hundred years ago."

Harry Leibfried, a white neighbor of the Greene family, remembered the annual autumn event, saying that people would come to Pleasant Ridge from cities as far away as Chicago and Detroit. They would be dressed in the latest fashions, and there would be singing, dancing, and various speeches made by out-of-

wife Caroline was so outraged at what Samuel Gadlin had done that he refused to permit his body to disgrace his daughter by being buried alongside her. Consequently a new burial ground was founded which eventually became the main cemetery. Inscribed on the marble tombstone was the name Samuel Gadlin and the words "murdered by a cruel murderer."

Arriving in Wisconsin in 1895 was Samuel C. Craig, a widower with three children. He was born in Boone County, Missouri, on March 11, 1866, and died on November 27, 1935. He married Irene Gadlin on October 14, 1909. He was employed as a janitor for the various schools and churches around Lancaster. Known popularly as "Cap'n Craig," he was the chef who, with Joe Grimes, would do all of the barbecuing of whole pigs and chickens at the "Big Barbecue and Bowery" staged every August 4 by the Autumn Leaf Club in the grove located near The Hall on Thomas Greene's farm.

One of the primary goals of the community was the building of a school. By 1870, a log schoolhouse, District No. 5 School, had been built with the aid of white neighbors. Boys and girls, young and old, of both races, attended the school, and it was here that many of the ex-slaves received their first schooling. Several of the teachers were white but many, including Bill Brown, Henry Richmond, and Sarah Greene, were black. Most went on to graduate from Lancaster High School and several, including Sarah Greene and Romulus Richmond, attended college, becoming a teacher and a minister respectively.

Sarah Elizabeth Greene, the oldest daughter of Thomas and Hattie Greene, was born in Pleasant Ridge on October 4, 1870. She exemplified those who achieved educational success. Her early education was received in the little log schoolhouse of District No. 5 on Pleasant Ridge, and she attended Lancaster High School where she received many merit awards of honor for scholarship and attendance. After graduation from high school she attended Western College at Macon, Missouri. In the Western College class of 1899 commencement program she was listed as delivering the class Proclamation. She was also recording secretary for the class. She later spent about seven years teaching in a college at Sacksonville, Missouri, having also taught at the Pleasant Ridge Community School. During her vacation periods she accumulated more teaching credits by attending Atlanta University in Georgia.

She continued to teach until her health began to fail, then took a respite from teaching in an effort to recover. Not accustomed to idleness, she took a job at a restaurant which apparently proved to be

The disruption of the slave system caused by the Emancipation Proclamation and the South's loss of the Civil War enabled Afro-Americans to move freely for the first time, with the result that the relative number of blacks in the north central states (comprising the free states from Ohio to Kansas and from the Ohio River and the northern perimeter of the Missouri River to the Canadian border, including Wisconsin) almost doubled in the decade between 1860 and 1870. In 1860 there were eight blacks to every thousand whites; in 1870 the ratio was fourteen to every thousand. In no other part of the country did such a rapid increase of the black population occur. In Wisconsin the mass migration brought about a doubling of the state's Afro-American citizens. By 1870 there were 2,113 scattered statewide, employed as domestic servants, house painters, seamstresses, miners, masons, barbers—and farmers.

ALTHOUGH today most blacks tend to be city dwellers, in the last century many of them lived in rural areas, pursuing the same goals, facing the same hardships, enjoying the same rewards and simple pleasures as their white neighors. Two such Wisconsin farming communities which blacks pioneered were in the Cheyenne Valley community in the Town of Forest in Vernon County and the Pleasant Ridge community in the Town of Beetown in Grant County.

The Cheyenne Valley community, although not the earliest, was certainly the largest of these two communities. Its first permanent settler was Walden Stewart, who arrived in May, 1855. Stewart was a free black, born in North Carolina, who had moved to Illinois where his children were born and where he and his wife Hettie lived for two decades before Stewart brought his family to Vernon County at the age of sixty.

By 1855, the enactment of restrictions, disfanchisement, and the denial of public education to Afro-Americans in the northern border states, as well as the ever-present fear generated by the Fugitive Slave Act, had undoubtedly prompted Stewart to move on northward with his family to the Town of Forest. In the next four years the Stewarts were joined by five other free black families, four of which had also previously lived in North Carolina and had followed the same pattern of migration.

Wesley Barton, born in Alton, Madison County, Illinois, in 1818, was among these pioneers, arriving in the Town of Forest in August of 1855, accompanied by a slave boy. In bringing the boy north to Wisconsin and freedom, he said, "This was the only thing I ever

stole." Barton Corners, now called Burr Corners, was originally named after this pioneer settler. Barton was appointed the community's first postmaster in 1859, and in 1882 he moved to Baraboo in Sauk County.

These six Afro-American families, residing in a valley of rich farmland that was fertile, suitable for grazing, an "island of unglaciated land in a vast sea of glaciated," prospered from the beginning. By 1860, two of these farmers were among the four wealthiest out of fifty families in the township in terms of size of farmland and value of livestock.

The town was described as being covered with excellent timber from which the settlers built their first temporary homes of logs or else reconstructed aleady existing structures. Bear, deer, and grouse made up their meat supply and the forest helped to furnish them with fruit, nuts, and roots as variations in their diet. Any other supplies such as ammunition, salt, and meal required a trip of several days by pack horse to the Mississippi River.

When, in 1862, President Lincoln finally gave the order permitting blacks to serve in the Union armies during the Civil War, five men from the community enlisted. Two were brothers who served in the Sixth Wisconsin Volunteer Infantry, a regiment of the famous Iron Brigade, which participated in several of the bitterest and bloodiest battles of the Civil War. One of the brothers was wounded twice and the other was killed in action in 1864 at Weldon Railroad, Virginia.

After the Union victory in 1865, several new inhabitants migrated to Cheyenne Valley, one of whom was Samuel Arms, a former slave. According to his son, Otis, Samuel had been a slave on a plantation in Milledgeville, Georgia. Tiring of the cruel treatment inflicted upon him, he stole away to the swamp where he barricaded himself in an old abandoned cabin. The overseer of the plantation sent men to capture him, but it was only their threat of severing his right arm at the shoulder that persuaded him to surrender. His punishment for this attempted escape was thirty-one lashes with a cat-o'nine tails. When Union soldiers captured the plantation where he lived and worked, Samuel accompanied the Union Army northward, serving as a drummer. After the Civil War he was brought to Wisconsin from Pennsylvania by Union officers. He first worked at Wonewoc, training horses for Nate Fisk and his son before eventually moving to Cheyenne Valley, where he purchased his own land and began farming. By 1870, sixty-two Afro-American inhabitants comprised eleven families residing in the Town of Forest.

privileges, including working on their own. Griffith, who had treated them more like helpers than slaves, had been very disappointed by their leaving. Mrs. Ollie Lewis related that when Griffith discovered where the Greenes had settled he wrote them, inquiring why they had left and asking them to return. But the freedom to farm their own land, to raise and maintain a family, and to educate their children was too highly valued to be abandoned. The *Platteville Journey* in 1936 quoted Thomas Greene as saying, "I saw too many families broken up on the auction block. A strong man or a good wench would bring $1,000 each, while owners would often give away a mammy's children to get rid of them." As a slave, Thomas Greene had been eager to learn how to read and write, having once obtained a book and begun learning to read when the word was passed prohibiting slaves from learning to read and write. Under those conditions the Greenes had no intention of returning, no matter how benevolent Griffith was as a slave owner.

In October, 1864, Thomas Greene was drafted into the Union Army, walking to Prairie du Chien to enroll. He served in Company F, Thirteenth Wisconsin Regiment, Heavy Artillery, and was honorably discharged on November 18, 1865, at Louisville, Kentucky. When Thomas Greene was a slave, he frequently drove the Ulysses S. Grant family, then residents of St. Louis, to and from the home of the Griffiths. (Grant was then a tanner and Greene a slave.)

Thomas Greene was born in St. Charles County, Missouri in 1841 and died ninety-six years later in Pleasant Ridge. He married Hattie Lavenia Shepard on March 13, 1867. Six daughters and three sons were born to Thomas and Hattie. Thomas became a very prosperous farmer and a prominent figure, well known around southwestern Wisconsin.

THE end of the Civil War brought more settlers to the Pleasant Ridge area. Among those joining the community was Samuel Gadlin, from Talahoma, Tennessee, a Union veteran of the Civil War. He later married Caroline Shepard. A tragic incident occurred in 1883 involving Gadlin and a white neighbor which interrupted the harmony of the community and led to the creation of a new cemetery. A white man had reasons to suspect that Gadlin was showing some attention to his daughter, whereupon the white man promptly shot and killed Gadlin. The father of Gadlin's deceased

boys, by hook or crook, was able to acquire a team of horses and a wagon. This acquisition made the trip to St. Louis easier and quicker, but being fugitive slaves, the danger of being apprehended was ever present. To avoid being captured, they had to hide out on several occasions. Many years later Mrs. Lillie Richmond recalled her grandfather, John Greene, recounting of how on one occasion after discovering that they were being followed, they hid in a cornfield for hours before they could safely continue the journey. Eventually, with the aid of the Underground Railroad, they arrived in St. Louis.

Mrs. Lillie Richmond also recalled hearing her father say that the immediate concern of her grandfather, John Greene, upon arriving in St. Louis was to see that the "borrowed" team and wagon be returned to the owner. John Greene sought out the man to whom he had frequently sold apples. Knowing the man to be honest and trustworthy, he asked him if he would return the team and wagon. The man, according to Mrs. Lillie Richmond, smiled and said, "John, if you took a dozen teams and wagons, it would't pay you for what you justly have coming to you." But despite the rationale offered him for keeping the team, John made the man promise that he would return the team and wagon. Assured that the promise would be fulfilled, the Greene family boarded a train in St. Louis for their first train ride ever, getting off at Dunleith, now East Dubuque. Later in life Mrs. Lillie Richmond in an interview describing the trip stated that "you could rightfully call it the Freedom Train, I guess." According to Mrs. Ollie Lewis's description of the trip as told to her by her grandfather, John Greene, by the time they reached East Dubuque all of the clothes they had packed in a trunk had been stolen, leaving an empty trunk to be carried first to Potosi and then later to Pleasant Ridge.

Their first winter was spent on a farm near Bloomington. Later the Greenes moved to Pleasant Ridge, occupying a log cabin, the cellar of which had been used for storing ice. As Mrs. Lewis stated, "Almost every new arrival needed some kind of 'helping out.' " And the Greenes were no exception. After their arrival in Pleasant Ridge they were supplied with food and clothing by the Shepard family.

By 1870 the Greenes had purchased enough land, at the going rate of $1.50 per acre, to start their own farm in Pleasant Ridge. Much of the money for the purchase, approximately $700 of it, had been saved by the Greenes from small earnings they received while still in slavery. Their owner during those days was Dan Griffith, a wealthy, prestigious, and kindly man who had allowed them most

Arriving in the Town of Union, Vernon County, in 1879, was Thomas Shivers, his sister Mary and a brother, Ashley. Thomas was born in slavery in 1854 on a plantation near the Town of Alamo, Crockett County, Tennessee. By the turn of the century he had purchased sixty acres of land from his Uncle Edmund Harris and another 200 acres from Samuel Bass. Shivers had been one of the few slaves permitted to attend school. A man of ideas and innovations, he adopted new methods and techniques in his farm operation. For example, he was the purchaser of the first farm tractor in the area and by 1920 was one of the first to install a hot and cold water system as well as an electric light and power system in his home. One of his sons, Alga, supervised the construction of several of the huge round barns (symbols of prosperity) built in the area.

BETWEEN 1870 and 1880, the Cheyenne Valley community continued to increase in size. One assessment states that this growth in population was due to the interspersal of the Afro-American farms among those of their white neighbors. As one author has described it: "This spacial integration resulted in economic integration which led to considerable intermarriage between Afro-Americans and the Norwegian, Irish and Bohemians who settled in this area." Such integration permitted a wider selection of available marriage partners within the community, thus decreasing the need to seek mates outside the immediate area.

As a thoroughly integrated community, the members worked and socialized together. Otis Arms, one of the oldest remaining Afro-American residents in Cheyenne Valley, recalls that his father Samuel Arms and his neighbor Matthew Revels would put their horses together to form a team for farming chores until either or both of them could buy another horse.

Mrs. Flora Shivers, age ninety-three and perhaps the oldest remaining resident of the community, stated, "We were so rich yet so poor." As she recalled, everyone had plenty of food but very little money. They had big barrels of pork, sauerkraut, molasses, corn, and all the milk they could drink. Children would help in the milking of the cows, and the milk would be put in cans or crocks and then churned into butter.

Sorghum was raised. It would be taken to the mills where it would be ground and the juice made into sorghum syrup and

molasses. Wheat was also grown and ground into flour at the mill. It was the chore of the children to shuck and shell the corn which, together with the wheat crop, would be taken to the mill to be ground into meal and flour.

Potatoes, cabbages, and rutabagas were stored in a large hole dug in the ground and covered until ready for use. According to Otis Arms, the usual crops consisted of grain, wheat, oats, barley, corn, and rye. A crop of rye or a field of clover was not of great value and could therefore be plowed under every seven years for fertilization purposes.

There were other occupations besides farming in this thriving community that continued to flourish for several decades after the Civil War. In this rich timber area men worked as lumberjacks and in various other jobs associated with wood, such as barrel, shingle, and lath makers and stave cutters.

The community's co-operation was demonstrated by other activities as well. Blacks and whites worked together to construct a community church on land donated by an Afro-American, Mark Revels. A log church was originally built, but it burned down and a new building was constructed in 1895. It was of a Free Methodist affiliation, with ministers who usually came from La Farge and were rotated every two years.

Mrs. Flora Shivers recalled that the church would be filled every Sunday morning. People would come on foot, sometimes carrying babies for distances of seven miles or more. She remembered her grandfather Revels attending church with a red handkerchief around his neck, apparently the custom of the time. His voice was so strong, she recalled, that when he sang, it seemed that the roof would be raised. Mrs. Shivers also recounted the times when she would go by horse and buggy to towns as distant as Oshkosh, Richland Center, or Pardeeville as a delegate to the Methodist Church convention. She said that her husband never argued about her going on these trips without him because, as she explained, "Someone had to stay back and take care of things."

Education was always an important concern for both races. A decade or two before 1900 a completely integrated school was built by District No. 3 on land donated by a white man, John B. Eastman, for whom the school was named. It was on a ninety-nine-year lease that was to revert to the original owner whenever the school ceased to be used for educational purposes. In the early days after the Civil War, schools in Vernon, as in other counties, were apt to be an "old log cabin, poorly lighted, largely unventilated, wretchedly

care of his mother, his brothers and sisters and the farm. His first job was that of a deckhand on a Mississippi River packet. He was a big man, standing 6' 1" and weighing 200 pounds. It was said that as a young man he could easily lift a 300-pound barrel of salt into a farmer's wagon. His skill with the axe enabled him to say "that if all the trees he had felled in his time were put together, they would make a substantial forest." Even after the age of ninety he was able to hold his own in woodchopping bees sponsored by the Baptist Church. His phenomenal strength and gentle manners were the "talk of the river." He later worked for over twenty-five years for Zeigler's, a Lancaster hardware firm.

AFTER the outbreak of the Civil War in 1861, William Ross moved to Wisconsin from Missouri accompanied by his former slaves, the Grimes family, Nancy Grimes and her children, Thomas, Joseph, Henry, Martha, and Nancy and several grandchildren. Before coming to Beetown and purchasing a farm at Pleasant Ridge they first settled at Potosi. Joseph Grimes married Nettie Gadlin, daughter of Civil War veteran Samuel Gadlin and Caroline Shepard. They had two children.

Harry Leibfried, a neighbor of the Pleasant Ridge community residents, stated that Joe Grimes was employed as a handyman for the Shreiners, a prominent Lancaster family. According to a sister of Mrs. Leibfried, Joe was a good cook who frequently invited them over to partake of his delicious fried chicken. She also attested to his good sense of humor, stating that she once asked him for his recipe for frying such tasty chicken. He replied in a very serious manner, "I use essence of squid oil." Believing what he said and not realizing that he was merely being facetious, she searched all over town for essence of squid oil, only to discover slight smirks on the faces of those she asked.

After several unsuccessful attempts to escape from slavery, the Greene family, consisting of John and wife Lillie Smith Greene, their five grown children Hardy, Thomas, Amy, Francis, Sarah, an infant grandchild, Lillie, and Tom Smith, brother of Mrs. Lillie Smith Greene, in 1863, made successful their escape effort. They left their slave home in St. Charles County, Missouri, on foot, their immediate destination being St. Louis. It was familiar route since John Greene had traveled to St. Louis numerous times with loads of apples to sell. They walked for many miles before one of the Greene

again. The census of 1850 records the Shepards as living in a hotel in Lancaster. Apparently they were still working for Horner and had not yet purchased their own land.

It was a few years after their arrival that the Shepards purchased land sold to them by Horner at $1.50 an acre. Thus, the Shepard family was the first of several Afro-American families, drawn to Wisconsin by the prospect of freedom, who bought land and settled in Pleasant Ridge before the end of the Civil War. With the help of white neighbors, they cleared the land, built log cabins, and began raising crops and rearing children.

Charles Shepard was listed in the 1850 census as being twenty-nine years old, with a wife Caroline Brent twenty-five and three children, Harriet five, John three, and Mary one. A total of eleven children, two dying in infancy, were born to Charles and Caroline. The couple also had the distinction of giving birth to the first black child born in Grant County, Isaac, named for his uncle.

Charles Shepard and his son John were among the first area volunteers to enlist when Lincoln issued the order permitting black participation in the war. They walked from Pleasant Ridge to Prairie du Chien to be inducted into the Union Army. Charles served with the Fiftieth U.S. Infantry Regiment and was killed at Vicksburg. John served with Company K, Forty-Second U.S. Regiment and died at Cairo, Illinois, of a disease contracted while on his way home to Pleasant Ridge. Both names are inscribed on the Civil War memorial erected in 1866 on the lawn of the Grant County Courthouse in Lancaster.

Isaac Shepard, husband of Sarah Brown, brother of Charles P., and uncle of John, was listed in the 1850 census as being twenty-one years of age and in the 1870 census as a farmer owning real estate valued at $6,000 and property worth $1,200. Isaac and Sarah had five children. Although born in slavery and not allowed to learn to read and write, Isaac became one of the most prosperous farmers and respected citizens of Grant County. Noted for his honesty, he emerged as the foremost leader, advisor, and counselor of the Pleasant Ridge community. As J. Allen Barber, leader of his own white community, repeatedly said, "the word of Isaac Shepard was as good as the bond of most white men." He served on the school board and was elected treasurer of School District No. 5. He died in February, 1896.

Edward C. Shepard was the son of Charles and nephew of Isaac. After the death of his father at the siege of Vicksburg, "Ed", as he was always called, at thirteen assumed the responsibilities of taking

Wesley Barton, founder of Barton Corners—now called Burr Corners—who came to Vernon County in 1855. (Courtesy of Mrs. Minnie Owens, Baraboo)

Charles Edward Shepard, a former slave and head of the first family of black settlers in Grant County. Pictured here in the early 1920's, he was still capable of "swinging a mean axe" in the annual wood-chopping contest.

ALTHOUGH the two races lived in peace and friendship in the Cheyenne Valley community, the influx of blacks from the South caused resentment in some quarters. In 1847 Wisconsinites voted down black suffrage, 14,615 to 7,664, and in 1861 a mob of Irish workers in Milwaukee dragged a black man accused of murdering one of their number from a local jail and lynched him, parading thereafter through the streets shouting anti-Negro and anti-abolitionist epithets. In the legislative session of 1863, about sixty petitions requesting a prohibition of further black immigration were submitted to the Assembly.

Nevertheless, black migration continued, with black settlements springing up in nearly every county throughout the state. One such area was Grant County in the southwest corner of Wisconsin, where despite the fact that slaves had been brought in earlier by Southerners attracted to the lead-mining possibilities, thirty-five blacks lived in freedom by 1860: six in Lancaster, six in Potosi, seven in Platteville, one in Waterloo, and fifteen in Beetown. Actually the permanent residence of those listed as living in Beetown and Lancaster was a small farming community located in the Town of Beetown in a rock-strewn area of rolling hills covered by a dense forest. Pleasant Ridge the first arrivals had named it because it was atop high ground and "offered a pleasant view to all."

The origin of the community goes back to 1848, the year Wisconsin was admitted into the Union, when the William Horner family, traveling by ox team with their former slaves, the Shepards, arrived from Haymarket, Warren County, Virginia. According to Reverend James E. Allen's *History of the Negro Pioneer Settlers of Grant County,* "those included in the Shepard family accompanying Horner were Charles and his wife Caroline Shepard and their three children, Harriet, John and Mary." There also was Isaac, a brother of Charles, and Sarah Brown, the only member of the group who had not been freed. Isaac later returned to Virginia and purchased her freedom, and that of her two children, for a thousand dollars. He then married her, although she was only fourteen. An aged mother and several brothers and sisters remained behind in hopes of coming west at a later date. Evidence of a letter addressed to Charles from a sister in Washington, D.C., dated April 14, 1861, suggests that correspondence between the Shepards in Wisconsin and those who remained in Virginia (they subsequently migrated to Washington, D.C.) had been maintained for some time. Eventually contact between the separated family was lost and they never saw each other

constructed and furnished, where grown boys and girls, with little children, were taught from old-fashioned and various textbooks." By the late 1870's and early 1880's the log cabin schools were being replaced with neat frame buildings "sometimes roomy and well lighted, with seats and desks in keeping, and occasionally a good blackboard and a map or two on the walls."

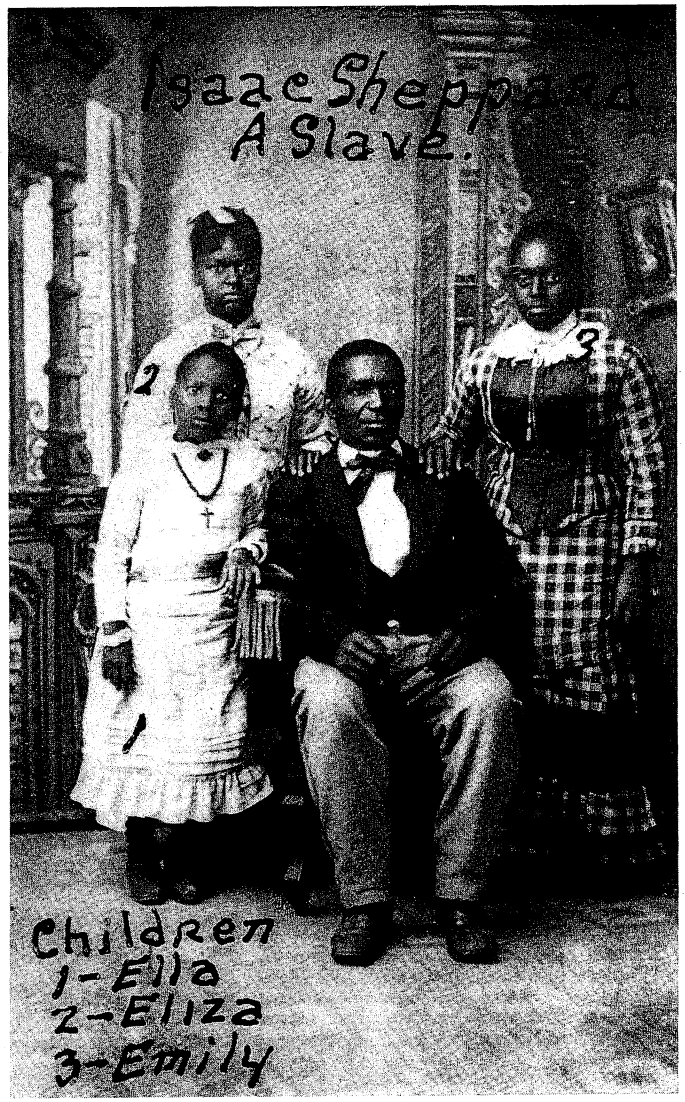
None of the teachers were blacks. Mrs. Shivers recalled that her teacher had to walk a considerable distancce to reach the school where she taught thirty or forty pupils in a single classroom for a salary of sixteen dollars a month. Later, male teachers averaged $28 and females $22 a month.

Although picnics were frequent communal affairs during the summer, August 25 was *the* big picnic day. As Mrs. Shivers remembered, people would walk from the church to the picnic grounds. The picnics were held on the land of various members of the community, on sites having plenty of trees to provide shade. At such times the road to the woods would come alive with people joining the procession. Platforms, stands, and several long tables would be set up and the baskets of food brought by the picnickers would be placed on them. Everyone would then help himself.

Other forms of recreation included dancing, a favorite entertainment. Most of these affairs were held at different homes, but a few took place in a hall located near Hillsboro. Mrs. Shivers never went to them but her sisters and brothers did and often played music for the dancers. Otis Arms described how he played piano, his cousin the violin, and Elsworth Walden the guitar for parties and dances.

The men of the community formed a baseball team. When they went to play other teams in the valley some of the women went along to cheer. The Mount Tabor baseball team was the chief rival. Otis Arms described how his father loved horses. At one time he had about seventeen horses including one colt that was extremely fast and, as Otis stated, "could really make a buggy's wheels sing." Horses were necessary for work but were often used for pleasure as well. A horse-racing track was located in Hillsboro.

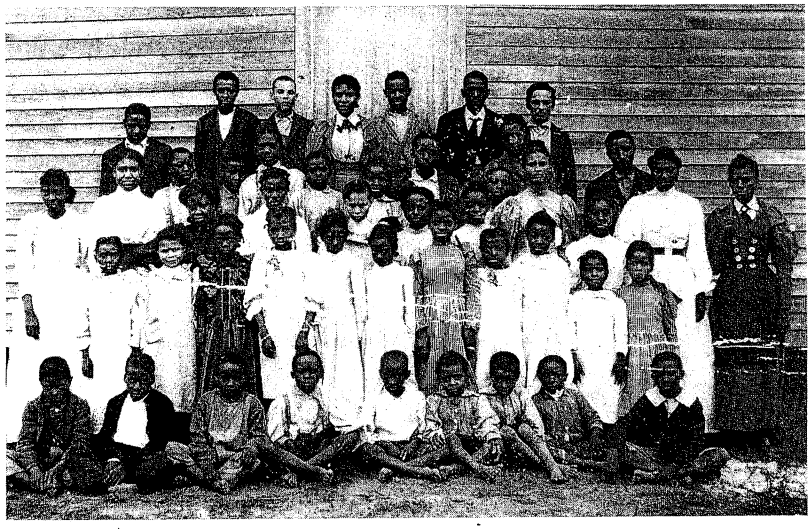
Relations between the black settlers and their white neighbors were harmonious. They not only co-operated with each other to ensure mutual survival by sharing the burdens and hardship of pioneer farming, but also shared the joys of life together. They attended the same churches, schools, and community affairs. As Mrs. Shivers recollected, "The people were tough and rough but I never heard tell of anybody killing anyone."



Isaac Shepard, a former slave from Virginia, pictured in the 1870's as a pillar of the Pleasant Ridge community in Grant County. (Courtesy Grant County Historical Society)

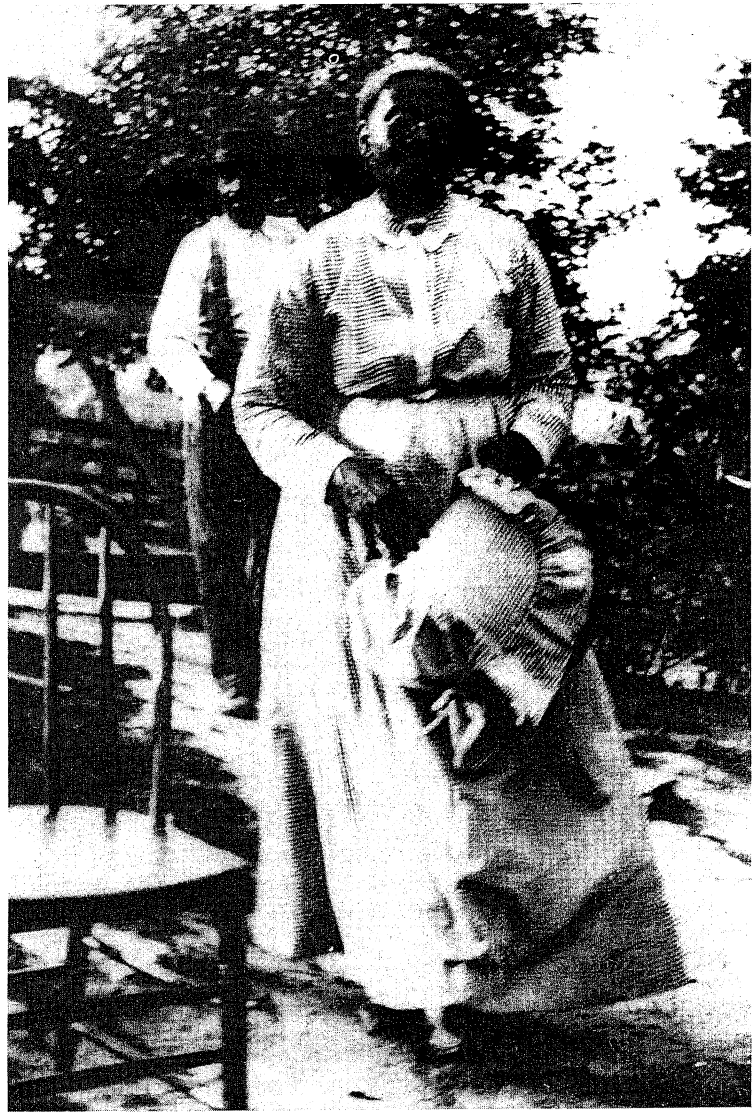
Thomas Greene, an escaped slave from Missouri who served in a Wisconsin artillery regiment during the Civil War and lived until 1937 in the Pleasant Ridge settlement. (Courtesy Grant County Historical Society)

Mrs. Ollie Green Lewis, last landowning resident of the Pleasant Ridge community, pictured in the Pleasant Ridge cemetery prior to her death in 1959.



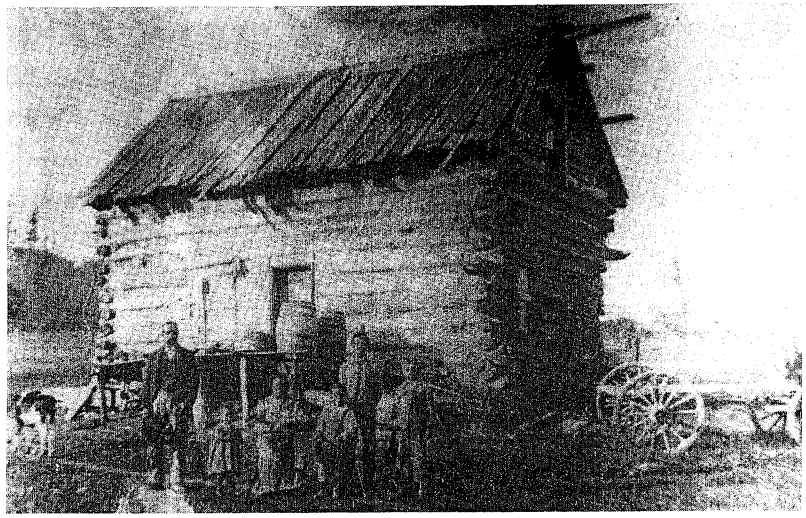
Members of the Pleasant Ridge black community, including representatives of the Greene, Shepard, Gadlin, Grimes, and Craig families, pictured about 1895. (Courtesy Grant County Historical Society)

The Ashley Shivers family, formerly of Pleasant Ridge, pictured in front of their barber shop in Madison, ca. 1900. (Courtesy of Mr. and Mrs. Odell Taliaferro)



Francis Greene and her brother Thomas, pictured in Pleasant Ridge during the 1920's. (Courtesy Grant County Historical Society)

William, Sarah, and Ollie Greene, children of Thomas and Harriet Greene of Pleasant Ridge. Sarah graduated from Western College in Macon, Missouri, and taught school in both Missouri and Wisconsin. (Courtesy Grant County Historical Society)



Samuel. Arms family, Cheyenne Valley community, Vernon County, 1901. (Courtesy of Otis Arms)

Eastman School, Vernon County, pictured in 1905. (Courtesy of H. Knadle)